

thoughts on the 20th anniversary of October's designation as National Breast Cancer Awareness Month. I am pleased to see the dedication and awareness that has grown over the past 2 decades regarding this specific type of cancer.

Twenty years ago, very few people openly discussed breast cancer. General public awareness regarding the high occurrence or symptoms was next to none. As a result many lives were lost due to the lack of knowledge and education regarding detection, treatment, and prevention. However, over the past 2 decades awareness has reached astronomical levels. Today, breast cancer awareness is displayed by various organizations and facets of all kinds both in and out of the health care community. Most of all breast care awareness is highlighted by the growing number of survivors who are alive to share their stories of difficulty and hope. That alone is a feat in itself which shows that public awareness has grown and continues to do so.

My wife Barbara is one of these survivors, who battled this condition, not once, but twice. If it was not for the continuous efforts over the past 2 decades, my wife may not have had the knowledge or encouragement to detect early symptoms and seek diagnosis and treatment. My family and I are thankful everyday that Barbara made it through these difficult ordeals. Together we learned how important it is for women of all ages to be proactive in learning about prevention, detecting symptoms, and seeking early treatment.

I applaud the various efforts that are being carried out nationwide by varying entities such as business, corporations, media, publications, schools, spokespersons, and women and men of all ages. This widespread dedication is a tremendous force that has proven to be influential in our Nation's efforts to combat this disease.

I believe it is important for all of us to take an active part in helping to educate the public and find a cure. Currently, there are legislative initiatives geared towards increasing research and funding for all types of cancer, including breast cancer. It is my hope that as this Congress draws to a close that we work together in a broad bipartisan manner to see that we secure necessary funding for the National Institutes of Health, NIH, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, CDC. The President has requested inadequate funding levels in the fiscal year 2005 budget for these programs, which oversee a great deal of cancer research done in this country. As a member of the Senate Committee on Appropriations I was pleased to support and help pass increased funding for the NIH and CDC in the fiscal year 2005 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education appropriation bill. But it is still critical that my colleagues work in a bipartisan manner and support these increases as we complete the final stages of the appropriations process.

Once again, I commend the work and dedication of all the individuals who continue to bring awareness to this important cause in the month of October, as well as year round. These efforts have saved numerous lives and will someday hopefully eradicate this type of cancer.

MILC PROGRAM

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, while the Senate has passed some important legislation over the last few days, I deeply regret that the Senate will leave town today without extending the Milk Income Loss Contract, MILC, Program. Wisconsin's dairy farmers have relied on the safety net provided by the MILC Program to get them through the lowest milk prices in recent years, and this program needs to be extended.

I applaud my colleagues, the senior Senator from Wisconsin, Mr. KOHL, for his efforts to extend the MILC Program. Wisconsin farmers count on the safety net the MILC Program provides, and I hope that the Senate will take up and pass an extension of MILC before that program expires on September 30, 2005.

NATIONAL SPINA BIFIDA AWARENESS MONTH

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, I rise today to remind my colleagues that October is National Spina Bifida Awareness Month and to pay tribute to the more than 70,000 Americans and their family members who are currently affected by Spina bifida—the Nation's most common, permanently disabling birth defect.

Spina bifida is a neural tube defect that occurs when the central nervous system does not properly close during the early stages of pregnancy. Spina bifida affects more than 4,000 pregnancies each year, with 1,500 babies born with Spina bifida each year. There are three different forms of Spina bifida—the most severe being myelomeningocele Spina bifida, which causes nerve damage and severe disabilities. Myelomeningocele Spina bifida is diagnosed in 96 percent of children born with this condition. Additionally, 70 to 90 percent of the children born with Spina bifida are at risk of mental retardation, a condition caused when spinal fluid collects around the brain.

The exact cause of Spina bifida is not known, but researchers have concluded that women of childbearing age who take daily folic acid supplements can reduce their chances of having a Spina Bifida pregnancy by up to 75 percent. Progress has been made with regard to the importance of consuming folic acid supplements and maintaining diets rich in folic acid. The September 17, 2004, edition of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention publication, Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, finds that 40 percent of women of

childbearing age reported taking a vitamin containing folic acid every day, an increase of eight percentage points from 2003. This increase suggests a substantial positive change in behavior. Since the Food and Drug Administration decision to fortify enriched grains with folic acid, the CDC has documented a 26 percent decline in these birth defects. Despite this success, thousands of pregnancies each year continue to be affected by these preventable birth defects. Thus, increasing use of vitamins containing folic acid remains an important strategy for preventing these birth defects.

Although folic acid consumption reduces the risk and incidence of Spina bifida pregnancies, we will still have babies born with Spina Bifida who need intensive care and families that need guidance and support in caring for and raising these children. As a result of this neural tube defect, most babies suffer from a host of physical, psychological, and educational challenges, including paralysis, developmental delay, numerous surgeries, and living with a shunt in their skulls in an attempt to ameliorate their condition. Today, approximately 90 percent of all babies diagnosed with this birth defect live into adulthood, approximately 80 percent have normal IQs, and approximately 75 percent participate in sports and other recreational activities. With proper medical care, people who suffer from Spina Bifida can lead full and productive lives. However, they must learn how to move around using braces, crutches or wheelchairs, and how to function independently. They are also at risk of a host of secondary health problems ranging from depression and learning disabilities to skin problems and severe latex allergies.

Lifesaving breakthroughs in research, combined with improvements in health care and treatment of children with Spina Bifida, now fortunately lead many with Spina bifida to live into adulthood. However, adults with Spina bifida face many new challenges in the fields of education, job training, independent living, health care for secondary conditions, and concerns related to aging.

I am grateful for my colleague from Missouri, Senator BOND who, along with myself, has been working to improve the quality of life for individuals with Spina bifida with the passage of the Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities Prevention Act of 2003 and supporting increased funding for the National Spina Bifida Program at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In fiscal year 2004, Congress provided a much needed \$3 million in funding for the National Spina Bifida Program. I strongly urge my colleagues to support increased funding in fiscal year 2005 to ensure that the CDC has the resources necessary to prevent Spina bifida, improve quality-of-life for those living with the condition, and to deliver important public health messages to those communities most at risk for a Spina bifida pregnancy.